

REMARKS

Reconsideration of the present application is respectfully requested. Claims 1, 12 and 16 have been amended. No claims have been canceled or added.

Claims 1-25 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being obvious based on U.S. Patent no. 5,253,412 of Fukuoka et al. ("Fukuoka"). Fukuoka describes an apparatus for "processing" optical fibers, including removing the jacket around the optical fibers, cleaning the exposed fibers and cutting the fibers to a specified length. See, generally, Fukuoka abstract and col. 1, lines 27-36.

The present invention, on the other hand, generally relates to a light cable interface, designed to be incorporated into an endoscopic light source unit, to securely hold a light cable inserted into the light source unit. The invention enables one-handed insertion of a light cable into the light source unit, while accommodating and securely holding a light cable that can be any of various sizes.

Claim 1, as amended, recites:

1. (Currently amended) An apparatus, comprising:
 - a base;
 - a jaw assembly coupled to the base; and
 - a latch coupled to the base to hold the jaw assembly open, the jaw assembly defining an aperture when open, the latch to allow the jaw assembly to close around a cable **automatically** to secure the cable in **response to insertion of the cable into the aperture**. (Emphasis added).

Independent claim 1 has been amended to recite that the latch, which is to hold the jaw assembly open, is also to allow the jaw assembly to close around a cable

automatically to secure the cable in response to insertion of the cable into the aperture.

Fukuoka fails to disclose or suggest any such apparatus. During the telephone interview conducted between the Examiner and Applicant's representative on 6/21/06, the Examiner agreed that addition of the limitation "automatically" would overcome the rejection.

Independent claims 12 and 16 have also been amended to include similar limitations. Claim 12, for example, recites:

12. (Currently amended) A method comprising:
 - receiving a light transmission cable inserted into an aperture defined by a jaw assembly in an opened position;
 - releasing a latch which holds the jaw assembly in the opened position **automatically** in response to the light transmission cable being inserted into the aperture; and
 - moving the jaw assembly into a closed position around the light transmission cable in response to the latch being released, so as to secure the light transmission cable in the jaw assembly. (Emphasis added.)

Fukuoka does not disclose or suggest a method which comprises releasing a latch which holds a jaw assembly in an opened position automatically in response to a light transmission cable being inserted into an aperture. Therefore, claim 12 and all claims which depend on it are not rendered unpatentable by Fukuoka.

Claim 16 has been amended to include limitations similar to those discussed above regarding claims 12 and 1, respectively, and is therefore patentable for similar reasons along with their dependent claims.

Although it is believed that above amendments and comments overcome the rejection, Applicant respectfully submits that these amendments were unnecessary and would like to respond to certain contentions made in the Final Office Action that Applicant believes are in error. Note that independent claim 20 has not been amended but is nonetheless believed to be patentable in its current (original) form.

In the Final Office Action, the Examiner contends, “The elements 18 and 16 may be viewed as a jaw assembly and latch that opens – for example, when 18 allows a fiber to enter device/the jaw area e.g. 16; thus holding the device/jaw area open – and holds the fiber once it is inserted.” Final Office Action, p. 3 (emphasis added). However, contrary to the Examiner’s contention, element 18 in Fukuoka (the pivotable arm) does not function “to allow a fiber to enter [a] device the jaw area,” nor does it function to “hold[] the device/jaw area open.” As pointed out in Applicant’s previous response, the only function of the pivotable arm 18 in Fukuoka (see Figures 3 and 6) is to press the optical fiber holder 15 against stopper 12b. See Fukuoka at, e.g., col. 6, lines 20-27; col. 6, line 66 – col. 7, line 8; col. 9, line 66 – col. 10, line 8.

Consequently, Applicant maintains that Fukuoka fails to disclose or suggest any apparatus that comprises a latch to hold the jaw assembly open, which is essentially recited in each of Applicant’s independent claims. For at least this additional reason, therefore, all of Applicant’s claims are patentable over Fukuoka, independently of the amendments set forth above.

In addition, on page 4 of the Final Office Action the Examiner responds to the arguments set forth on pages 15-16 of Applicant’s last response, regarding the recited

“actuator” or plunger actuator” and the lack of any suggestion/motivation to modify Fukuoka. Those arguments by Applicant, which apply at least to independent claim 20 and dependent claims 3, 13 and 17, are incorporated herein by reference in their entirety. The Examiner states in the Final Office Action (page 4), “As plungers are notoriously well known to be capable of securing objects via suction without damage – e.g. as contemplated in surgical devices by Hess et al. (2003/0065323) to secure vessel during surgical procedures. It would have been obvious . . .” (emphasis added).

Based on that comment it is not apparent that the Examiner understood the present invention as claimed, or the Hess reference for that matter. The clearly recited function of the “actuator” or “plunger actuator” in Applicant’s claims is as a release mechanism, whereas the “plunger” disclosed in Hess has a completely opposite purpose, i.e., to grasp something (a blood vessel). Moreover, neither the present invention nor Hess has any plunger that uses suction, contrary to what the Examiner seems to imply. The use of suction has no relevance to the present invention. Therefore, the Examiner’s rationale for maintaining that a suggestion/motivation exists in the prior art to modify Fukuoka to achieve the present invention simply does not withstand scrutiny. There is nothing in the prior art to suggest modifying Fukuoka in any way that could achieve the present invention. Therefore, the rejection was incorrect for this additional reason, at least as applied to claims 3, 13, 17 and 20.

Applicant refers to the plunger/actuator limitation here mainly for the purpose of pointing out one of several contentions by the Examiner that were overly general, conclusory, and lacking substantiation, and therefore inadequate to support a prior art rejection (see middle of page 16 of Applicant’s previous response). Other examples of

such statements are found on pages 3-4 of the initial Office Action (repeated on pages 5-6 of the Final Office Action). However, Applicant believes that in light of the foregoing remarks it is unnecessary and superfluous to specifically address those other statements and the affected claim limitations. Nonetheless, Applicant reserves the right to do so at a later time, if Applicant deems it necessary.

Therefore, all of the pending claims are believed to be patentable over the cited art for the foregoing reasons.

Dependent Claims

In view of the above remarks, a specific discussion of the dependent claims is considered to be unnecessary. Therefore, Applicants' silence regarding any dependent claim is not to be interpreted as agreement with, or acquiescence to, the rejection of such claim or as waiving any argument regarding that claim.

Conclusion

For the foregoing reasons, the present application is believed to be in condition for allowance, and such action is earnestly requested.

If there are any additional charges/credits, please charge/credit our deposit account no. 02-2666.

Respectfully submitted,
BLAKELY, SOKOLOFF, TAYLOR & ZAFMAN LLP

Dated: September 8, 2006



Jordan M. Becker
Reg. No. 39,602

Customer No. 08791
12400 Wilshire Blvd.
Seventh Floor
Los Angeles, CA 90025
(408) 720-8300